

One More Night Out by littlewitchhazels

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: Christmas Fluff, F/M, Fluff, Happy Ending, Post-Canon, Post-Season/Series 02, and ill admit it, i completely forgot about jonathan, i tried to write around it so hopefully it doesnt seem weird, im a sucker for slow dancing, post-s2, so i gotta shove that in there, the byers are happy and safe, the tiniest bit of angst

Language: English

Characters: Eleven (Stranger Things), Jim "Chief" Hopper, Joyce Byers, Will Byers

Relationships: Eleven & Jim "Chief" Hopper, Joyce Byers & Jim "Chief" Hopper, Joyce Byers/Jim "Chief" Hopper, Will Byers & Eleven

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Summary:

“Jane shouldn’t have to miss out,” Joyce had reasoned, “and the boys have been desperate to show her all things Christmas, or so I’ve been told.”

“I don’t know, Joyce, the Snow Ball was one night already and—“

“I know, Hop, I know. Just... Think about it?”

Alternatively: Joyce invites the Hoppers over for Christmas Eve and, despite all his worries, Hop decides that maybe one more night out with Jane would be worth their while (especially during the festive season!)

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“Jane shouldn’t have to miss out,” Joyce had reasoned, “and the boys have been desperate to show her all things Christmas, or so I’ve been told.”

“I don’t know, Joyce, the Snow Ball was one night already and—“

“I know, Hop, I know. Just... Think about it?”

That was how Hopper had ended up at the Byers’ front door with El — or Jane, as he should be calling her now — in tow. She was practically buzzing with excitement over the unexpected outing, and the chance to be with her friends again. Yes, she was allowed visits from the party at the cabin (something of which Hopper had begrudgingly agreed to), but there was something special about being allowed to set foot out instead. Twice she’d changed her outfit, going through a good load of the new clothes Joyce had gotten her, before finally settling on something she seemed satisfied with. It was strange but nice to see her acting like a regular teenage girl in spite of... Well, everything.

They hadn’t had time to pick up a proper present for their hosts, partially due to Hopper’s very last minute decision to take up Joyce’s offer, which had frustrated both of them greatly. Jane because she was incredibly insistent on ‘following holiday tradition’ — quite a mouthful for her, but Hopper expected it was a line fed to her by Mike or Will — and Hopper because turning up on Joyce’s doorstep empty-handed on Christmas Eve felt wrong. Joyce had assured them that gifts weren’t necessary, but at least it was something to say ‘thank you’ for the thoughtful invitation. In the end, Hopper settled with a bottle of wine hastily picked up from town and a quick card cobbled together by Jane with what little art supplies they had.

Hopper squeezed Jane’s hand, “You ready?”

Beaming up at him, Jane nodded vigorously. “Yes!”

He chuckled at her boundless enthusiasm and raised a hand to knock

soundly on the door. From within, he could hear soft Christmas music intermingling with chatter and scattered footfalls. Following his knock on the door, Hopper could hear a swiftly approaching *"I'll get it, I'll get it, don't worry baby; coming, coming!"* At the sound of the voice, Jane clutched the presents to her chest tightly and turned her unwavering attention towards the door. Within a matter of moments, the door creaked open and Joyce appeared before them. "Oh, Hop! You came!"

There was nothing particularly special about the way Joyce looked, but that care-free smile that only seemed to widen at the sight of him made her look radiant. Suddenly, all his worries and doubts about coming seemed stupidly inane in retrospect.

"Yeah, I thought about it and... Well, it couldn't hurt to spend Christmas somewhere other than, you know, the cabin. And El—Jane, she deserves a night out, so here we are."

Joyce's gaze quickly fell upon Jane, and Hopper couldn't help but smile as her eyes lit up at the sight of the young girl. He nudged Jane forward, who quickly ran into Joyce's outstretched arms. "Merry Christmas, Joyce!"

Joyce laughed and pulled Jane even closer. "Merry Christmas to you too, sweetheart, you looking forward to tomorrow?"

Jane nodded into Joyce's shoulder before pulling away to offer the merger presents they'd brought for her. "For you, from me and Hopper."

It took a moment for Joyce to register the gifts, which she took carefully from Jane; her eyes flickering between Jane, Hopper, and the items she held in her hands. "Oh, you didn't have to—"

"Think of it more as a 'thank you'," Hopper supplied, "from us."

Joyce regarded him for a moment before stepping out of the doorframe and letting them into the house. Hopper had almost forgotten that they were still standing on the porch in the cold, bundled up in scarves and coats. "Well, don't just stand there. Come in, come in! It's freezing out there!"

They hurried in, shaking off the snow clinging to their winter clothing before peeling off the layers they'd wrapped themselves in. Hopper had only just helped Jane wriggle her arms out of her slightly-too-large coat before she'd spotted Will across the room and dashed to give him a warm hug. They collided into each other with peals of laughter that swiftly changed to soft words that Hopper couldn't hear from where he stood. After a moment, Jane nodded enthusiastically and Will began to lead her around the house in what was presumably a tour of Christmas tradition, considering their stops at the tree and all the decorations hung around the house.

Joyce and Hopper weren't exactly sure when it happened, but Will and Jane had become fast friends in a matter of days, quickly forming an incredibly close bond seemingly from the moment they met properly. It was certainly a strange friendship — built on quiet contemplation and hushed conversation — but it was a strong one at that. Perhaps they'd found something in each other, linking back to their harrowing experiences with the Upside Down, that built the foundations for a bond between them. Whatever it was, Joyce was certainly glad for it.

Hopper hung up his and Jane's coats and took the chance to look over the living room. Without prior knowledge, he bet that nobody would be able to imagine the mess that had once sprawled across the walls, floor, and halls of the Byers house. Everything had certainly been sufficiently tidied away with everyone's help following what had happened in November. Sure, the corpse in the fridge and the enraged teen out cold on the living room floor had been something of an unpleasant surprise, but they'd dealt with that too.

"You know, you really didn't have to get me anything, Hop." Joyce muttered once Jane was out of earshot.

Hopper shrugged. "I wanted to," he said plainly, "and besides, Jane wouldn't let me hear the end of it if I— we didn't give you something."

Joyce smiled, turning the handmade card over in one hand. The lopsided handwriting was something of an attempt to teach Jane how to write better in preparation for school, but for as messy as it was Hopper was glad that it was at least readable. "This is very sweet.

Thank you.”

They stood awkwardly for a moment, their conversation at a standstill, before Joyce gestured towards the dining room. “Do you want to sit or— we could open the wine, I guess—“

“Yeah, no, that would be— that would be good.”

He followed Joyce as she made her way into the kitchen, rooting through the cupboards for a corkscrew. “Where’s Jonathan tonight?” Hopper asked, hesitantly floating around Joyce as he waited for something to do.

“The Wheelers’, with Nancy, or so he told me. Hey, could to reach that— no, no, not that one... Yes! Thanks.”

Setting the old wine glasses he dug out down on the table, Hopper leaned over to take the bottle from Joyce to free her hands. “Need anything else, Joyce?”

“Hmm? Oh, no, it’s all right.”

Hopper nodded slowly, sliding into one of the chairs as he waited for Joyce to emerge from the cupboards she’d practically crawled into in her search for a corkscrew. Finally, he heard a triumphant exclamation, and Joyce came over brandishing the nifty device victoriously.

Joyce wasted no time opening the bottle and pouring a hearty glass of wine for both her and Hopper. “Cheers, my friend, and a very merry Christmas to you!”

“To a happy, hopefully more normal, new year!”

Dinner had been a success despite Joyce’s warnings that cooking was ‘definitely her strong point’, an overall enjoyable time in spite of Jane’s stubbornness to avoid anything green on her plate. Joyce, however, had managed to goad her into eating her vegetables with promises of Christmas sweets and sugary drinks. As much as Hopper

scowls over Jane's smug grin as she scoops up her well-earned treats, he can't help but find a sort of merriment in all of it. Must be the Christmas spirit in the air.

Soon enough, Will and Jane retreated further into the house to gorge themselves on candy canes and continue whatever conversations they were having when they came giggling to the dining table. Neither parental figure was able to coax it out of them, so they thought it would be best to just leave it at that. Now alone once more, Joyce had suggested moving to the living room. "It's more comfortable," she'd reasoned, before promptly standing up and taking both her and Hopper's glasses with her.

So, of course, he had no choice but to follow her over. Joyce sunk into the couch with a groan, obviously worn out by a busy day of working, dashing around, and preparing dinner. Hopper took a seat next to her, but was sure to leave a respectable distance between the two of them. He still wasn't sure exactly about the boundaries between the two of them, but he would rather be overly cautious than overbearing.

Just as they'd settled into their seats, the old Christmas album came to its end and the sound of the looping crackle of the record player coaxed another tired groan from Joyce. "Don't worry," Hopper laughed, pushing himself up from the couch, "I'll do it."

Joyce mumbled a thanks as she took another sip of wine, watching over the brim of her glass as Hopper sorted through the pile of old records she'd dug out for the festive season and pulled out something from the bottom without looking too closely at the label. It didn't take long for the silence to be filled with soft-jazzy Christmas tunes. Hopper looked over to her for approval, and came back over once she'd given him a small nod.

He sat back down with a sigh, and they swiftly fell back into their comfortable silence. Joyce closed her eyes and let herself sink even deeper into the couch. With the soft music, warmth of the living room, and the exhaustion of the busy day, she could have almost fallen asleep right then and there. But then, after a few moments, Hopper spoke up. "Joyce, uh, thanks for this. It was... It was nice. I think Jane really enjoyed herself tonight."

She smiled at him. “Anytime, Hop.”

“I... I had a good time, too. It’s been a while.”

Though he’d left the rest unsaid, Joyce easily picked up on the context. It was easy to read in the stilted words and far-off gaze; telltale signs of when he let his thoughts trail off to darker places, locked away behind hurriedly built walls in his mind. Pursing her lips, Joyce reached over and laid a hand on his arm. “It’s really nice that you came.” She said quietly.

He shrugged. “I nearly didn’t. But look at all the fun I would have missed out on if I hadn’t!”

Joyce laughed, rolling her eyes at the grin that tugged at the corners of his mouth at what he must have thought was the best damn joke in the world. “What,” Joyce challenged, “so sitting around with me isn’t fun?”

“I never said it wasn’t. I’ll be sure to add ‘great company’ to the list, along with food, a glass of wine, and peace and quiet for once!”

She smiled, and was suddenly very aware of the fact that she was still touching his arm. Clearing her throat somewhat awkwardly, Joyce pulled her hand away and laid it purposely on her own knee. As far as she could tell, Hopper didn’t react.

In fact, it almost seemed as if he was going to continue their little conversation before a familiar few notes suddenly played from the sound system and brought on a whole host of old memories to Joyce’s mind. She must’ve had quite the reaction, considering the laugh that it coaxed from Hopper.

“Oh!” Joyce exclaimed, bringing a hand to her face, “I haven’t heard this song in years!”

As if on cue, Hopper put down his glass of wine on the table beside him and stood up from the couch offering her a hand. “How ‘bout it, Joyce, for old times sake?”

She gave a breathy laugh. Maybe Hopper’d had one too many glasses of wine tonight if he was suddenly asking her to dance. “Really,

Hop?”

He shrugged, swaying ever so slight to the music. “Why not? We never slow danced back then, so why not start now?”

A smile began to pull at the corners of Joyce’s lips. It was funny to bring up the old days, seeing as how nostalgia ran rampant with each and every little thing she and Hopper did together — chatting, confiding, smoking, laughing, smiling, and generally being close once again. Just over a year ago, this whole situation would have been unheard of, but here they were. “Joyce,” Hopper said, bringing her back to reality again, “that wasn’t exactly a ‘no’...”

She regarded him for a moment. On one hand, it was a difficult proposition to take up, considering the pain that still lingered in her heart after what had happened to... To Bob. Just to think that two months ago, they’d been doing the exact same thing whilst the boys had gone out trick-or-treating. The thought was enough to put a damper on her mood, and the smile that had found itself upon her lips was beginning to falter.

“Joyce?”

She opened her mouth to tell him a polite ‘no’, but something stopped her. As much as Joyce wanted to say ‘no’ — needed to, almost — there was something deep down that seemed to push her towards this strange but not wholly unwelcome situation. A piece of her from twenty or so years ago, laughing and smiling over the smallest matters in life, that swooned over the idea of dancing with Hopper. Biting her lip, she looked up at him and saw that concerned furrow of his brow at her hesitation. She knew if she said no, Hopper wouldn’t push her into it. There was every opportunity to step away, and yet...

“I guess,” she said slowly, “we could do... One dance.”

Joyce hadn’t even finished answering by the time Hopper had pulled her to her feet, barely giving her enough time to put down the glass of wine she’d been sipping at throughout the night. Laughter escaped her lips as she almost collided with Hopper before she stiffly straightened herself up.

Pushing herself up on her tiptoes, Joyce reached up to place a hand on Hopper's shoulder; all the while, Hopper just looked down with an amused glint in his eyes but said nothing. A wise choice. "I'll try not to step on your toes." She whispered.

Hopper laughed. "Don't worry, Joyce, I think I'm far more out of practice than you are."

"We'll see about that, Hop," Joyce chided, "we'll see."

Jane and Will peered out the crack of the door, watching with intrigue as Joyce and Hopper swayed to the music playing from the record player — some old song that Will didn't know the name to; Jane thought it sounded pretty. Will had told her that his mom and Hopper liked to talk and smoke together, but his face right now seemed... Weird. Not confused, not angry, not upset, just weird. Jane was going to have to find a word for it when she got home, or ask Mike about it later.

At first, when they'd heard Joyce's laughter floating down the hall, Will had gone very still. And when Joyce had laughed again — this time, intermingling with a deeper but softer chuckle that no doubt belong to Hopper — Will had stood up and peered out of the door to the hallway, then he went completely quiet and still.

She'd shuffled her way over and squeezed by Will's side to catch a glimpse of the sight that had made him go confusingly quiet. "Are Mom and Hopper... Dancing?" Will asked, almost as if he was thinking of the question but had accidentally said it aloud.

"Is that bad?" Jane asked, immediately taking Will's confused and intrigued tone as something to be worried about.

"Huh? Oh, no," he laughed, "nothing's wrong."

Looking back and forth between Will's face and the two adults dancing together in the living room, Jane tried to piece together the situation with what little words and understanding she had of

everything. “So... Is it good?”

After a moment of pondering, a small smile broke out on Will's face as he watched him mom laughing and smiling freely (for real, not just to make him feel better) for the first time in weeks. “Yeah, it's... It's really good.”

Jane nodded in agreement. “I think so, too.”

Author's Note:

Anyhow, Joyce deserves all the happiness in the world and this is my non-canon way of giving it to her! I hope you enjoyed! If you want, go check out my tumblr [@littlewitchhazels](#) (I have some more stuff on there if you're interested)

Happy holidays you guys!!